

Glenda Wiles

From: Todd Clark [tclark@50j0.com]
Sent: Wednesday, February 11, 2009 11:20 AM
To: Glenda Wiles
Subject: Airport support

Ravalli County Commissioners;

My name is Todd Clark, and I am a resident of Stevensville. I have been a Communications Engineer for over 20 years now and have lived all over the country, most recently, I was a resident of Chicago, but chose to call Montana my home six years ago and love it. My profession takes me all over the country, yet I still choose to make Ravalli County my home. One of the ways I can do this is by flying myself to my various job locations. That being said, the Hamilton airport where I fly out of due to it's services is very important to me and I find the apparent resistance of the local government to support this airport disturbing.

As a very active cross country pilot, I see airports of all sizes and service levels. The one thing I find in common with rural airports is local support. Granted they all have a few people who chose to encroach on the airport by building homes at the end of an airport that was there long before them, yet they choose to complain about something that they were aware of before they even bought the property. Even with a few ignorant complainers, the local governments all pretty much seem to understand the economic gain these airports provide and support them.

I am including a link to a Houston area newspaper story. When I read this, it really made me think about the support issues faced by the Hamilton airport.

Please take the few minutes to read the story to get a quick perspective on how other local governments feel about community airports.

<http://www.chron.com/dispatch/story.mpl/nb/woodlands/news/6254439.html>

Thank you for your time,

Todd Clark

2/11/2009

County airport in line for funds from federal stimulus plan

Runway expansion project would benefit from funding

By BETH KUHLES CHRONICLE CORRESPONDENT

Feb. 9, 2009, 3:20PM

The Lone Star Executive Airport may be able to speed up the expansion of its main runway if aviation funds are approved in the federal stimulus package.

Montgomery County Commissioners Court pledged matching funds for the project over the next two years should the runway be funded under the federal bill before Congress.

The proposed \$9 million project would extend the main runway from 6,000 to at least 7,000 feet and improve the capabilities of the airport.

If approved, the new runway could be up and running by the fall or winter of 2010, year ahead of schedule.

"We would have additional runway length, which offers more options and flexibility to our visitors," said Scott E. Smith, airport director "For corporate and business aviation, they could go out with more fuel and fly greater distances. We are also looking as larger transportation

aircraft."

Commissioners Court also directed Smith to study the potential for a longer runway, capable of handling large passenger planes from Immigration and Customs Enforcement. That agency, along with the U.S. Marshall's Service, contracts with the county to use surplus beds at the county jail for federal prisoners.

Smith warned that federal funds, under the Texas Department of Transportation rules, would only fund runways up to 7,000 feet at general aviation airport and that additional work would have to be done to be eligible for the ICE passenger flight contracts. Among those are on-site fire and rescue services, taxi and ramp improvements, lighting and fencing.

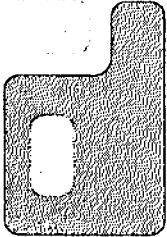
The Lone Star Executive Airport is in the midst of a major capital improvement project, which includes revamping its two runways, adding an air traffic control tower and increasing taxiways and hanger space.

FM 1484 is being rerouted to make room for the expanded runway and that is expected to open up about 2,700 more acres in the area for new development.

"It could be huge," said Precinct 1 Commissioner Mike Meador. "The economic impact would come earlier as opposed to later. The timing is perfect. We are really excited about it. We hope it happens."

The Texas Department of Transportation, which dispenses the federal aviation funds to general

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aviation airport in the state, notified the county about the possible funding in the stimulus package. The department asked the county if it is interested in accelerating the project if funding becomes available.

The county would be required to pay about \$40,000 for design and engineering work in 2009 and about \$900,000 in matching grants in 2010. While the federal funds would pay for 90 percent of the project, any expansion beyond 7,000 feet would be have to be paid entirely by the county, Smith said.

The county is considering a 7,500 foot runway to accommodate larger aircraft and discussed the possibility of an 8,000 foot runway to accommodate passenger planes used by ICE. Those planes transport federal prisoners and detainees internationally for the agency and require 8,000 to 9,000 foot runways.

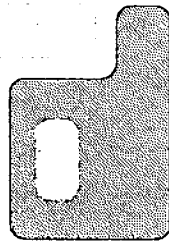
The county currently leases space at its county jails for federal prisoners and detainees. The contract is helping to pay for the new county jail annex, which will not be needed to house county inmates for several years

Smith said the federal stimulus package include \$2 to \$3 billion for aviation projects across the country. He believes the county has a good chance of getting some of the funding.

"Our project is seriously being considered," Smith said.

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